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ABSTRACT

One difference between articles published in general interest magazines and those that journalism students write for class assignments is the number of quotations used; too often students tell about some situation or person instead of letting their sources relate the information and opinions. In support of this observation are the results of an analysis of lead articles in 19 magazines. The average proportion of quotations in all the articles analyzed was 23%, with articles in magazines that have circulations above one million tending to have more quotes, a variety of sources, and simple, present-tense attributions (for example, "says" or "said" instead of "contended"). Teachers in magazine journalism classes can use the analytic technique by assigning students to mark and analyze one or more articles and then combining the individual analyses with discussion in class. In this way, teachers can actively involve students in seeing how articles are structured, understanding good quote use, and emulating the best techniques of established writers. (RL)

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QUOTE ANALYSIS AND ARTICLE IMPROVEMENT

A TEACHING TECHNIQUE

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QUOTE ANALYSIS AND ARTICLE IMPROVEMENT

A TEACHING TECHNIQUE

"Carefully analyze the articles in the magazines you're aiming for before you begin to write," we tell our students many times each semester. But, do they analyze carefully enough? Do they do more than search a potential market in Writers' Market or some other directory, thumb through several issues of a magazine, draw upon their stereotypes of the particular publication and then write? And then do they somehow fail to miss the mark? In other words, do they fail to sell their articles because their articles lack flow and personality; they're dull and magazine editors don't want dullness.

Perhaps the root of the problem is in students' analyses; they don't dig deeply enough into the techniques successful writers use to create salable articles.

More productive time should be spent carefully dissecting articles that have been published. The rather simple techniques illustrated in this presentation can help student writers visualize writing techniques they can and should be using; techniques used by established writers. It is aimed at showing students how successful magazine writers incorporate quotations from single and multiple sources into articles that sell. The quotation analysis should be employed in addition to the general analysis of magazine type, range of subjects, et cetera.

Why concentrate on quotations? We know from experience that quotations add interest, life and color to articles and among mass circulation magazines

these attributes please readers who turn to magazines to be entertained as well as informed. Rudolph Flesch counts the number of quotations to estimate the "human interest score" for articles. The more personal words and sentences — which include quotations among other points to include in the calculations — the higher the human interest score, he says, and the greater the potential general interest in the article.[1] Quotations make sources seem more dramatic than persons who were paraphrased, Weaver, Hopkins, Billings and Cole found in a study of news stories, though the use of quotations did not affect comprehension or retention of factual material presented in the articles.[2] We are aware of these principles. The challenge is to get students to incorporate them into their articles.

Casual study of magazine articles in a wide range of publications over a period of years suggested that the larger general interest magazines, especially, publish articles that contain sizeable proportions of quotations. Exceptions were how-to articles, essays, reviews, columns and other more descriptive articles. Many of the articles being written by students, on the other hand, lack the spark that quotations can enkindle. Too often students tell about some situation or person instead of letting the source or sources relate the information and opinions.

A more thorough analysis of articles was undertaken earlier this year. Twelve well known consumer magazines (TV Guide, Reader's Digest, Family Circle, Woman's Day, Ladies' Home Journal, McCall's, Playboy, Time, Sports Illustrated, Southern Living, Money, and Essence), two relatively new consumer magazines (Quest/77 and Working Woman), two "membership" magazines (Smithsonian and Travel & Leisure), one non-subscription health

food magazine (The Health Quarterly) and two national public relations magazines (Our Sun and General Motors Challenge) were purchased or otherwise garnered for the analyses. Of these, 11 are million or more circulation publications and most accept freelance work.

Since it is standard editorial procedure to select an article of rather general interest to lead off the major editorial section of an issue, for purposes of comparison the lead article or first article to appear on sequential full pages was selected for analysis. Substitutions were made only when the lead article did not include quotations.

Once the articles for analysis were selected, quotations in them were marked with a highlighting pen. In the slides that follow, look for the passages highlighted in yellow. For each, the number of lines quoted was divided by the total number of lines in the article to get the proportion (percentage) of quotations per article. Quotes less than one-half a line of type were not counted unless they were "widows." The technique is simple but it allows for comparison and visualization of the work.

A second simple technique, inserting numbers on the printed pages, helps demonstrate the number of sources quoted in an article and the ways different authors spread the quotes within their articles. In "Farewell, Mary Richards" in Ladies' Home Journal, for example, author Kathleen D. Fury devoted 45% of the article to quotations, all from one source, TV personality Mary Tyler Moore. Time's "New Housewife Blues" contained 34% quotes from 18 different sources, an example of Time's way of incorporating material from extensive interviews and Time's use of secondary sources such as previously written articles, books, and reports.

The analyses also indicates how some magazine writers incorporate long and short direct quotes and partial or "orphan" quotes and how some

alternate or weave in quotes from different sources in their articles. It indicates, too, how editors handle them.

The slides illustrate these techniques. They are arranged according to the proportion of quotes, from most to least:

1 - "Farewell, Mary Richards" by Kathleen D. Fury (Ladies' Home Journal): 45% quotations; one source, Mary Tyler Moore.

2 - "This Could Be the Start" by William Leggett (Sports Illustrated): 38% quotes; 12 sources. There is a quote lead: "Let's not put Steve Cauthen on a pedastal yet," Eddie Arcaro said. "The hazards of racing lie ahead...."

3 - "The New Single Women" by Fredelle Maynard (Woman's Day): 37% quotes; 17 sources, some books and articles. Note the first-person lead.

4 - "The New Housewife Blues" (Time): 34% quotes; 18 sources, some primary, some secondary. Note the pre-lead quote and the lead quote:

> I am asham'd that women are so simple
> To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
> Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway
> When they are bound to serve, love, and obey.
>
> (The Taming of the Shrew)

"Hogwash and bullshit," says New York Psychiatrist Judianne Densen-Gerber, J.D., M.D...."

5 - "In the Heat of Anger" by Terri Schultz (Working Woman): 29% quotes, some long, some fragments; 13 sources.

6 - "Sun Confronts the Indonesian Jungle" by Jim Moran (Our Sun, a PR magazine of Sun Oil Co.): 26% quotes; five sources.

7 - "Is Network News Slighting the Minorities" by Paul Good (TV Guide): 25% quotes; 10 sources, some papers and reports. Note the question lead and the extensive use of "says" for attribution.

8 - "TV Game Shows" by Earl C. Gottschalk, Jr. (Family Circle): 25% quotes, 15 sources.

9 - "The Murder of President Kennedy" by Vivian Cadden (McCall's): 24% quotes, many from government reports.

10 - "The Heady Business of Building Profits" by Peter A. Jannsen (Money): 22% quotes; eight sources, some books and articles.

11 - "Doctor to the World's Children" by Samuel A. Schreiner, Jr. (Reader's Digest): 21% quotes; heavy use of strongly descriptive phrases for attribution of quotes.

12 - "A Forgotten American 'Right'" (GM Challenge): 19% quotes; six sources. Note the quote lead: "If we succeed as businessmen, we can be real role models for the young people in our community," Mace Vaughn says...."

13 - "Getting Ahead" by Phyllis Gittens (Essence): 18% quotes; six sources, blocked into the structure rather than woven into it.

14 - "Getting a Handle on Community Appearance" by Philip Morris (Southern Living): 18% quotes; seven sources, again blocked into the manuscript structure.

15 - "The Lindberghs Liberate Monkeys from Constraints" by Rudolph Chelminski (Smithsonian): 18% quotes; two sources, the Lindberghs.

16 - "Life in Stone" by Philip Kopper (Quest/77): 15% quotes; one source, the subject of the piece; superfluity of fragments or orphan quotes.

17 - "Leg Thrombosis" by David Potterton (The Health Quarterly): 14% quotes, or quote because the quoted material is from a secondary source, the insertion of four paragraphs from an article in The Lancet.

18 - "Let Them Eat Sodium Stearoyl-2-Lactylate" by Nicholas von Hoffman (Playboy): 12% quotes; six sources, all evidently secondary sources. This is really an essay. Perhaps Playboy editors were interested in the author and his declamation on the subject.

19 - "Dingle: The Wild Peninsula" by Paul Theroux (Travel & Leisure): 0.5% quotes, most fragments or unattributed, but here again, perhaps the editors were concentrating on the famous writer's judgments about Dingle, which is extremely appropriate when dealing with known writers.

Articles from the million-and-more circulation magazines average 25% quotations, ranging from 45% in Ladies' Home Journal to 0.5% in Travel & Leisure. The two large-circulation articles with the lowest proportion of quotations — "Dingle: The Wild Peninsula" by Paul Theroux (Travel & Leisure) and "Let Them Eat Sodium Stearoyl-2-Lactylate" by Nicholas von Hoffman (Playboy), 0.5% and 12% respectively, could be classed as essays. Both are by well known writers whose by-lines and opinions could be considered sufficient to preclude extensive reliance on other sources.

The articles from less-than-a-million circulation magazines averaged 20% quotations, ranging from 29% in Working Woman to 14% in The Health Quarterly.

The average proportion of quotations in all articles analyzed was 23% quotations.

Besides ascertaining the proportion of quotations used in published articles and the number of sources quoted, a third aspect of quote use became evident in the analysis of articles selected for this study, namely the method or methods of attribution used by the authors of the articles. Articles from the larger magazines, particularly, tended to use non-descriptive attributions, usually "says" or "said," though other simple

single-word attributions were also used in the articles, including explains, admits, recalls, writes, points out, and replied. Most of these, it should be noted, are present tense verbs, which reinforces the viewpoint expressed by many writers and writing analysts: magazine feature articles should be kept moving and present tense helps achieve a sense of currency.

The observation that "says" and "said" predominate as verbs of attribution reflects the finding of Cole and Shaw, namely that the use of stronger words than "said" and/or use of "body language" statements (Gesturing with his left hand, Jackson contended that ....) causes readers to view entire stories with suspicion.[3] The simple attribution, they found, was judged most believable, complete, accurate and objective. Active attributive verbs and "body language" statements, they found in analyzing news stories, were rated bright and excitable but inaccurate and unclear. In the articles analyzed for this presentation, the simple, direct, usually present tense and unobtrusive, attributive verbs predominated.

Conclusions

Magazine article writers are often intermediaries. They relay information from sources other than themselves and they should do this interestingly and entertainingly if they hope to see their works published. An important technique for doing this is to use quotations. Single source articles can incorporate many quotes from the source if the source has interesting comments to relate. The writer must develop the skill of drawing out quotable observations. Multiple source articles can be built in blocks — the "story" of one source followed by the story of another and another — or by integrating quotations and paraphrases from the sources by topic.

The specific methods can depend on the sources, subject and ability of the writer to weave the material into a unified whole.

The value of analyzing how established writers use quotations depends on how well the student writers grasp the relationship between technique and use of it in their own articles. Coloring and counting lines of quotes can help student writers visualize the nuances of technique that lead to professionalism.

The rather simple means of analysis described in this presentation can be incorporated into classroom plans by assigning different students to mark and analyze one or more articles and then combining the individual analyses in class with discussion. The important pedagogical value is in involving student in the analyses, in helping them see how articles are structured, and in encouraging them to emulate the best of the techniques found in established magazines in their own articles. Experience of the last year has been that many student saw the value of good quote use when confronted with marked articles from established magazines. These students began concentrating on writing technique as well as subject matter and they began having more success in getting their articles accepted for publication.

Footnotes

1. Rudolph Flesch, The Art of Readable Writing. (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), p. 215.

2. David H. Weaver, W. Wat Hopkins, William H. Billings, Richard R. Cole, "Quotations vs. Paraphrases in Writing: Does it Make a Difference?" Journalism Quarterly, 51:400-404 (Autumn 1974).

3. Richard R. Cole and Donald Lewis Shaw, "'Powerful' Verbs and 'Body Language': Does the Reader Notice?" Journalism Quarterly, 51:62-66 (Spring 1974).

PERCENTAGE OF QUOTES MATERIAL IN SELECTED ARTICLES

Ranked by Magazine Circulation

TV Guide "Is Network News Slighting the Minorities" by Paul Good	25%
Reader's Digest "Doctor to the World's Children" by Samuel A. Schreiner, Jr.	21
Family Circle "TV Game Shows" by Earl C. Gottschalk, Jr.	25
Woman's Day "The New Single Women" by Fredelle Maynard	37
Ladies' Home Journal "Farewell, Mary Richards" by Kathleen D. Fury	45
McCall's "The Murder of President Kennedy" by Vivian Cadden	24
Playboy "Let Them Eat Sodium Stearoyl-2-Lactylate" by Nicholas von Hoffman	12
Time "The New Housewife Blues"	34
Sports Illustrated "This Could Be the Start" by William Leggett	38
Travel & Leisure "Dingle: The Wild Peninsula" by Paul Theroux	0.5
Southern Living "Getting a Handle on Community Appearance" by Philip Morris	18
— The million-plus circulation articles listed above averaged 25% quotations —	
Smithsonian "The Lindberghs Liberate Monkeys from Constraints" by Rudolph Chelminski	18
Money "The Heady Business of Building Profits" by Peter A. Jansen	22
Essence "Getting Ahead" by Phyllis Gittens	18
Quest/77 * "Life in Stone" by Philip Kopper	15

Our Sun
"Sun Confronts the Indonesian Jungle" by Jim Moran 26

General Motors Challenge*
"A Forgotten American 'Right'" 19

The Health Quarterly*
"Leg Thrombosis" by David Potterton 14

Working Woman*
"In the Heat of Anger" by Terri Schultz 29

* estimated circulation ranking. Other ranking based on Standard Rate & Data Service or Writer's Markets '76

— The less-than-a-million circulation articles listed above averaged 20% quotations.

The average for all articles analyzed was 23%. —